

VZCZCXRO9970
PP RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHRN
DE RUEHCI #0136 1191700
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 281700Z APR 08
FM AMCONSUL KOLKATA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1981
INFO RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0065
RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 2419
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1856
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 0863
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI PRIORITY 0858
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 0577
RUEHGO/AMEMBASSY RANGOON PRIORITY 0427
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 0152
RUEHRC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE USD FAS WASHINGTON DC
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA
RUEHRN/USMISSION UN ROME PRIORITY 0030
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 0105

UNCLAS KOLKATA 000136

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT PLS PASS APHIS, HHS AND CDC
ROME FOR FAO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KFLU](#) [TBIO](#) [EAGR](#) [SENV](#) [AMED](#) [CASC](#) [IN](#) [BG](#)
SUBJECT: BIRD FLU SPREADS TO NEW AREAS IN TRIPURA

REF: A) KOLKATA 128, B) KOLKATA 111

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: The H5N1 virus has spread to areas another village in Tripura's two AI-affected districts. On the basis of outbreak location maps, Tripura officials and post contacts suggest -- off-the-record -- that the infection arrived from neighboring Bangladesh. The state government is working to contain the infection through culling, compensation and sanitization. Tripura's Principal Secretary in the Animal Resources Development (ARD) Department favors outsourcing of culling operations so that his government can focus on community awareness building and rehabilitation activities for poultry owners who have lost their birds. END COMMENT.

12. (U) Avian influenza has spread to new areas in Tripura. On April 19, samples from Mohanpur village in West Tripura district tested positive for H5N1 (Reftel A). The village is located near the India-Bangladesh international border, about 20 miles Northwest of state capital Agartala. On April 24, Rapid Response Teams (RRT) from Tripura's ARD department culled 4,200 poultry in the area. By April 29, ARD says they will have culled about 60,000 birds.

13. (U) In addition to Mohanpur, samples sent to Bhopal from Nadilagh village, also in W. Tripura district, tested positive for H5N1. Tripura ARD Principal Secretary Dr. U Venkateshwarlu told Post that culling began on April 26. On April 25, Tripura ARD convened a meeting to estimate the number of birds to be culled at Nadilagh and adjoining areas. These villages are located about 10 miles Southwest of Agartala, close to the India-Bangladesh border. The UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) has sent an expert to Tripura to assess the outbreak.

14. (SBU) Despite a quick response after the first outbreak in three villages (Kamalpur, Malaya and Tilagang) in the North Tripura district on April 7 (reftel b), the H5N1 virus seems to be spreading in Tripura. Venkateshwarlu admitted that close cultural and economic ties between people in India and Bangladesh were making it difficult to restrict cross-border movement of people and poultry. He said in all the locations, the virus was detected in samples collected during routine

surveillance efforts. In Kamalpur village (N. Tripura district), only one set of samples out of seven tested at the national lab tested positive. In Nadilagh village (W. Tripura district) also, only one set out of eight sets tested positive. "As we know the locations with negative results, we have an idea of how the virus is spreading. So far it has been a sporadic outbreak, with H5N1-positive locations separated by large tracts of H5N1-negative poultry population," said Venkateshwarlu.

15. (U) Venkateshwarlu said his government had sufficient resources and hardware to contain the outbreak. But the state government has requested an increase in financial and hardware assistance from the GOI. Venkateshwarlu believes the state government should outsource the culling work so that its own resources can be deployed in post-culling rehabilitation and development activities. With most of Tripura's poultry coming from backyard farms, mechanical culling will not be efficient, he added. Tripura has so far reported no human infection. Observation units have been set up in village hospitals. An isolation ward with ventilators and medicines has been set up at Agartala's G.B. Pant Hospital.

16. (SBU) COMMENT: Off-the-record, Post contacts blame Bangladesh the H5N1 virus entering into Tripura through the 550 mile porous border. Kamalpur is the Northern-most point among Tripura's three H5N1 hot spots. Because the three locations are separated by H5N1-negative areas, they argue, the only way the virus could have appeared in Tripura was by crossing the border from infected areas in Bangladesh. Mohanpur and Nadilagh are located along economic corridors that see a busy back and forth of people and goods, legally and illegally. Because it is difficult to impose an effective ban on poultry movement across the border, Tripura may see more areas affected by H5N1 outbreaks, and the finger-pointing will likely continue.

JARDINE